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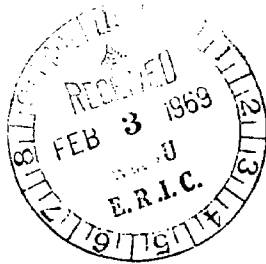
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ABSTRACT

The 1968 booklet, a report by the National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education, contains a brief description of the problems facing more than 5 million Mexican Americans in our society. According to the report, the failure of education has been the failure to recognize the needs of Mexican American students; this is evidenced by their high dropout rate. The report also notes that, because of the language barrier and the lack of suitable instruments to test the intelligence and the learning potential of Mexican American children, they are labeled as "mentally retarded" (e.g., in California, Mexican American students account for more than 40% of the so-called mentally handicapped). Included in the booklet is a section entitled "Blueprint for Action," which lists 11 suggestions for working toward solutions to the problems of educating Mexican American children. (EJ)



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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: Quest for Equality



NC003245

A Report by the National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education

1968

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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: Quest for Equality



A WASTE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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Failure to provide education to hundreds of thousands is a shameful waste of human resources. The melting climate in which all citizens are accepted on the

Educators, especially, must search their consciences for a society acceptable in America?

Never before has the need for equal opportunity for a greater need of equal educational opportunity than

The National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education was created to advise on the opinions expressed in this, the Committee's first report, are those of the Committee and

education to hundreds of thousands of people whose cultural heritage is "different" has resulted in human resources. The melting pot ideology that we speak of so proudly has not produced a moral citizens are accepted on the basis of individual worth.

must search their consciences for an answer to the question: Is only a monolingual, monocultural America?

need for equal opportunity for all Americans been so sharply put into focus. And no group is in educational opportunity than the Mexican American.

an Education was created to advise the Commissioner of Education on the education of Mexican Americans. The
rt, are those of the Committee and do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U. S. Office of Education.

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: HOW HAVE WE FAILED HIM?

There are more than five million Mexican Americans in the United States, 80 per cent of whom live in California and Texas. Most of the other are found in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Illinois, and Ohio. In excess of four million of these people live in urban areas.

The Mexican American is the second largest minority group in the United States and by far the largest group of Spanish-speaking Americans. The fact that most of them have learned Spanish as their first language and that millions are not fluent in English makes them no less Americans. Their interests, attitudes, and aspirations differ little from those of other Americans.

Yet they have been denied the opportunities that most other Americans take for granted. Suffering the same problems of poverty and discrimination of other minority groups, the Mexican American is additionally handicapped by the language barrier. The typical Mexican American child is born of parents who speak little or no English, and thus Spanish becomes his only language. When he reaches school age, he is enrolled in a public school where only English is accepted. Bewildered and ashamed of his "backwardness," the Mexican American child is quickly discouraged and drops out within a few years, enlarging the ranks of the uneducated, unskilled, and unwanted.

Let's look at some shocking statistics.

- The average Mexican American child in the Southwest drops out of school by the seventh year. In Texas, 89 per cent of the children with Spanish surnames drop out before completing high school!
- Along the Texas-Mexico border, four out of five Mexican American children fall two grades behind their Anglo classmates by the time they reach the fifth grade.
- A recent study in California showed that in some schools more than 50 per cent of Mexican American high school students drop out between grades 10 and 11; one Texas school reported a 40 per cent dropout rate for the same grades.
- Mexican Americans account for more than 40 per cent of the so-called "mentally handicapped" in California.
- Although Spanish surnamed students make up more than 14 per cent of the public school population of California, less than 1/2 of one per cent of the college students enrolled in the seven campuses of the University of California are of this group.

These facts opportunity of these ch

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These facts give tragic evidence of our failure to provide genuine educational opportunity to Mexican American youth; and today there are nearly two million of these children between the ages of 3 and 18.

It can't be said that nothing has been done for these youngsters. The Federal Government, through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), has given a good deal of financial aid to schools for the purpose of improving the education of Mexican Americans. Although a few millions of dollars have been spent, hundreds of millions still need to be spent — and for hundreds of thousands of Americans it is even now too late. State and local agencies have spent respectable sums of money — and even more energy — in behalf of the Mexican American but none has given the problem the really massive thrust it deserves.

Money is only one problem. Perhaps an even more serious one is the problem of involuntary discrimination — that it, our insistence on fitting the Mexican American student into the monolingual, monocultural mold of the Anglo American. This discrimination, plus the grim fact that millions of Mexican Americans suffer from poverty, cultural isolation, and language rejection, has virtually destroyed them as contributing members of society.

Another problem is that we have not developed suitable instruments for accurately measuring the intelligence and learning potential of the Mexican American child. Because there is little communication between educators and these non-English speaking youngsters, the pupils are likely to be dismissed as "mentally retarded." Common sense tells us that this is simply not so. The chasm that exists between the teacher and the student in the classroom is even wider between the school and the home, where there is virtually no communication. Such lack of understanding soon destroys any educational aspiration the pupil might have or that his parents might have for him.

SIX CRITICAL ISSUES

The Committee believes there are six critical issues in the improvement of the school environment.

Issue No. 1: The existing educational system is not meeting the needs of the students and demand serious evaluation.

Issue No. 2: Instruments are lacking for the evaluation of the students and Americans.

Issue No. 3: A very small percentage of the students actually enroll.

Issue No. 4: Legal restrictions in various states.

Issue No. 5: There is an exceedingly high dropout rate.

Issue No. 6: Society has not recognized the importance of the school environment.

six critical issues in the improvement of Mexican American education:

- 1: The existing educational programs for the Mexican American have been woefully inadequate and demand serious evaluation.
- 2: Instruments are lacking for measuring intelligence and achievement potential of Mexican Americans.
- 3: A very small percentage of Mexican American students who could qualify for college actually enroll.
- 4: Legal restrictions in various states discourage instructions in languages other than English.
- 5: There is an exceedingly high dropout rate of Mexican Americans in public schools.
- 6: Society has not recognized, or at least accepted, the need for a multilingual, multicultural school environment.

HOW CAN WE ATTACK THE PROBLEM?

**The Mexican American Affairs Unit of the U. S. C
educational success of the Mexican American:**

1. Preparation of teachers with the skills necessary in a manner as to insure success. This includes b
2. Instruction in both English and Spanish so that pupil learning a second language, and then u in all curriculums, and at all grade levels until language.
3. Instruction to preschool Mexican American pu place with others by the time they enter school
4. Complete programs for adults in both basic e

The vehicles for achieving the foregoing impera

1. Teacher preparation: Educational Personnel I
2. Bilingual education: Title VII, ESEA, Bilingual
3. Early childhood education: Headstart and Fo
4. Adult basic and vocational education: Amendr

rs Unit of the U. S. Office of Education has identified four imperatives for Mexican American:

with the skills necessary to instruct Mexican American pupils in such a
ess. This includes bilingual capability.

and Spanish so that the mother tongue is strengthened concurrent with the
language, and then using both languages. This bilingual instruction must occur
all grade levels until the student is thoroughly at home with his second

Mexican American pupils so that they are more nearly ready to take their
ime they enter school.

adults in both basic education and vocational education.

the foregoing imperatives already exist:

educational Personnel Development Act, Bilingual Education Act, Title I, ESEA

VII, ESEA, Bilingual Education Act

n: Headstart and Followthrough, Title I, ESEA

al education: Amendments to the 1963 Vocational Education Act

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Once we have faced up to the critical issues and recognized the imp

GENERAL

1. We must immediately begin to train a administrators.
2. We must make use of current knowle programs that promise learning succ
3. We must agitate for priority funding b immediately.
4. We must see that testing instruments achievement potential of the Mexicar
5. We must promote programs to assist in languages other than English.
6. We must help the various states to r
7. ~~We must provide assistance~~, through education.
8. With the leadership of the Federal Go programs, to equip the Mexican Ameri our economic society.
9. We must encourage parental involvem
10. We must encourage state and local ed personnel on their staffs.
11. We must foster a joint effort of the Fe materials that are designed expresse

Recognized the imperatives, the Committee recommends specific action on several fronts.

begin to train at least 100,000 bilingual-bicultural teachers and educational

of current knowledge and encourage further research to assist in creating educational
learning success for the Mexican American.

priority funding by the U. S. Office of Education to develop educational programs

testing instruments are developed that will accurately measure the intelligence and
of the Mexican American child.

programs to assist state legislatures in taking the necessary action to permit instruction
in English.

various states to recognize the need for statewide programs in bilingual education.

instance, through Federal funds, to Mexican American students in pursuit of a college

of the Federal Government, we must increase the adult basic education and vocational
the Mexican American adult with skills and knowledge necessary to become a partner in
y.

parental involvement programs at the state and local levels.

state and local education agencies to use more effectively the Mexican American
ffs.

it effort of the Federal Government and private enterprise to produce instructional
designed expressly for Mexican American students.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

1. Increase the funding of Title VI, minimum of \$100 per child for re
2. Increase the funding of Headsta financial base to meet the needs of programs.
3. Continue the present funding lev
4. Continue Title VII, ESEA, as a Education.
5. Continue Title VIII, ESEA, Dropou by the U. S. Office of Education, a
6. Increase the funding support of Opportunity Grants, by 15 per ce Americans.
7. Establish a Land Grant College, v related to the bilingual-bicultural
8. Amend Title I, ESEA, to permit th whose income may not qualify hi qualify because of cultural attitu

Increase the funding of Title VII, ESEA, to \$150,000,000 for the year 1970, to provide a minimum of \$100 per child for relevant educational services for the Mexican American.

Increase the funding of Headstart and Followthrough by 10 per cent, to provide a sufficient financial base to meet the needs of many Mexican Americans not presently served by these programs.

Continue the present funding level of the Migrant Education provision of Title I, ESEA.

Continue Title VII, ESEA, as a discretionary program administered by the U. S. Office of Education.

Continue Title VIII, ESEA, Dropout Prevention Act, as a discretionary program administered by the U. S. Office of Education, and increase its funding for 1970 to \$50,000,000.

Increase the funding support of Title IV-A of the Higher Education Act, Educational Opportunity Grants, by 15 per cent, to be directed toward college enrollment of Mexican Americans.

Establish a Land Grant College, with specific responsibility for programs and research related to the bilingual-bicultural student.

Amend Title I, ESEA, to permit the use of funds for the education of Mexican Americans whose income may not qualify him, or as more often is the case, whose children may not qualify because of cultural attitudes toward depending on public welfare support.

STATE LEGISLATION

1. Remove legal
2. Appropriate ar
Mexican Ameri

ADMINISTRATION — U. S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION

1. Expand the res
include all Spa
2. Continue to pre
personnel in all
3. Allocate specifi
Mexican Ameri
4. Develop an inte
American.

1. Remove legal barriers to instruction in the public schools in languages other than English.
2. Appropriate and identify supplementary funds for support of specialized programs for the Mexican American.

EDUCATION

1. Expand the responsibility of the Mexican American Affairs Unit of the Office of Education to include all Spanish-speaking programs.
2. Continue to press for employment of Mexican American professionals and supporting personnel in all units of the U. S. Office of Education.
3. Allocate specific funds for determining the most effective direction in research for the Mexican American.
4. Develop an intensive program of information on the educational needs of the Mexican American.

ADMINISTRATION — CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

1. Seek out and employ Mexican American teachers in state departments of education
2. Set up a unit for coordinating Mexican American education for the Mexican American community
3. Develop a statewide program for Mexican American education
4. Promote the redirection of funds to bilingual-bicultural programs
5. Promote the increased involvement of Mexican American parents in local educational programs

SCHOOL OFFICERS

Seek out and employ Mexican Americans in policy and administrative positions in state departments of education, and encourage similar programs in local education agencies.

Set up a unit for coordinating and encouraging the development and operation of programs for the Mexican American.

Develop a statewide program for bilingual education.

Promote the redirection of priorities in the use of Title I, ESEA, funds, to focus on bilingual-bicultural programs.

Promote the increased involvement of the Mexican American in advisory committees in local educational programs.

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The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U. S. Office

The Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory of Albuquerque, deeply concerned with and as well as other Southwestern culturally divergent groups, is pleased to have published this report.

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sition or policy of the U. S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement of the U. S. O. E. should be inferred.

ERIC, concerned with and dedicated to improving the educational opportunities of the Mexican American, published this report.